

TOWN OF ARLINGTON
TOWN MEETING ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE

April 15, 2014

Call to Order

The recessed meeting of the Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Eric Helmuth in the Selectmen's Hearing Room in Town Hall on Tuesday, April 15, 2014, at 7:35 PM.

Quorum

A quorum was present: Steve Storch, Roland Chaput, Adam Auster, Wes Beal, and Eric Helmuth.

John Leone arrived shortly after the start of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION:
*Approval of
Minutes*

Mr. Chaput moved that the minutes of the March 6, 2014, meeting be approved, with the following correction:

In the second enumerated item on page 2, the words "Town Meeting members" should be inserted before the words "rising count."

The motion passed.

Reports

Chair

Committee Chair Eric Helmuth reported that the Arlington Advocate had published an editorial supporting the use of an electronic-voting system at Town meeting. He said there were some minor factual errors in the editorial.

Mr. Leone said he had been interviewed by a reporter from the Advocate for a news story about electronic voting at Town Meeting. Mr. Helmuth said he had had a similar conversation with the same reporter.

Moderator

Town Moderator John Leone reported that Options Technologies Interactive had come to Town Hall last Wednesday for a dry run using the equipment, which had been satisfactory.

He said that the test found no conflict between the voting system and the timer that is controlled wirelessly by the Moderator.

New Business

DISCUSSION: *Voting Data*

Mr. Storch said that there should be clear procedures to preserve the unmodified original copy of voting data.

Custody of Data

He said that procedures should make clear who takes custody of voting data, and that however the data may subsequently be formatted or modified for publication, they should also be kept in their original form.

Mr. Helmuth said he did not know if Options Technologies will provide the internal database or just a report based on it. He also said he did not know if having the original database would help the Town to track the data and publish an accurate record.

Maintain Original Data

Mr. Helmuth said that based on the discussion he believes that the Committee agrees on the need to preserve an authoritative copy of voting data that does not change however the data may later be edited, organized, and formatted for publication.

Mr. Leone said that Joan Roman, the Town's public-information officer, told him that the Town would make manipulable data available to the public through a public-document request.

Mr. Helmuth suggested that he and Mr. Leone would discuss the custody issue with the Town Clerk and others.

DISCUSSION: *Training and Orientation*

Voting handsets can be inadvertently turned off when users put the devices in their pockets and sit, Mr. Leone said, adding that this has been a source of malfunction in other town meetings according to the Options Technologies staff.

Mr. Leone said there would be a test vote every night. He said that votes would be coordinated with the Moderator's timer clock, which he would use to indicate the voting period.

*Display of
Votes*

Mr. Leone said that at the dry run the staff from Options Technologies had told him that it would not be possible to project the final tally of each vote on the screen at Town Meeting without also showing at least one page of the roll-call results.

However, Mr. Helmuth said that he subsequently explained the issue to Mark Fite at Options Technology, who said the system could and would be made to display a simple tally separate from a subsequent roll-call display, if any.

Mr. Leone said that in any event he, as Town Moderator, would have the results and could announce them.

He also said he plans to show roll-call results for the test vote at the start of each night.

Mr. Helmuth said he thought the biggest issues would be the cultural changes, not the technical ones.

*Assisting
Town Meeting
Members*

Mr. Helmuth said he would be seated at the help desk next to the system operator to interact with Town Meeting members as needed. In this capacity, he said, he would insulate the operator from having to interact with others while operating the system.

Josh Lobel will prepare badges for committee members and volunteers, he said, which will help identify voting helpers to Town Meeting members.

*DISCUSSION:
Logistics and
Volunteers*

Options Technologies, Mr. Helmuth said, recommends that there should be 4–5 volunteers at check-in to avoid bottlenecks distributing the handsets. Volunteers must also collect the handsets at the end of the night and repack them in their cases, he said.

He said that Options Technologies will test each handset at the start of each night's meeting.

Mr. Leone said that the high-school volunteers might not be available at 11 PM.

Mr. Chaput volunteered to supervise the high-school volunteers.

Mr. Auster said that not all of the 4 or 5 volunteers needed at the start of each meeting would be required once the meeting is under way and most members were seated.

Mr. Leone said he would speak to Marie Krepelka in the Selectmen's Office about including volunteers in the motion granting various non-Town Meeting members the liberty of the Town Meeting enclosure.

Following a discussion, Mr. Helmuth said he would ask Mr. Lobel to include the words "E-Voting Staff" on the volunteer badges.

DISCUSSION
*Accommodating
Disabilities*

Mr. Leone said that the Disabilities Commission had at one point suggested that members with impaired dexterity might want the Town to provide a lanyard that would allow members to wear their handsets around their necks.

Mr. Helmuth reported that he had met with the Disabilities Commission more than a year ago and that the Commission had made the following suggestions:

- Designating someone to help operate the handset on behalf of a member with a disability is a good all-around accommodation.
- Mentioning the availability of accommodations in written materials will make members more comfortable in asking for help.

He added that the Q&A that was included with the Committee's report in the Town Meeting packet mentions the availability of accommodations for disabilities.

Mr. Leone said that as Town Moderator he would assign a helper as needed. He noted that members might require assistance with any or all of the following: pressing the button, reading the handset display, reading the projection on screen.

However, he said that to the best of his knowledge there were no Town Meeting members who required such help.

Mr. Helmuth said that another accommodation might be to activate backlighting on the handset displays. He said that this option would not normally be on by default because it is a system-wide setting affecting all of the handsets and because it dramatically increases power consumption and shortens battery life.

Another step that the Disabilities Commission identified was to reserve seating in the front row. However, Mr. Leone said that the first row at Town Meeting is mostly vacant.

DISCUSSION
Warrant Articles

Mr. Auster will present the bylaw change under Article 11, Mr. Helmuth will present the resolution under Article 54, and the Finance Committee will present its recommendation an appropriation under Article 55.

DISCUSSION
*Publication
of Votes*

Mr. Helmuth said that Joan Roman, the Town's public-information officer, will format and publish the results of each night's voting.

Mr. Beal suggested projecting the web page of those results onto the screen at the start of Town Meeting on the second night, to show members that their votes are being reported online.

DISCUSSION
Future Meetings

The Committee discussed future work and the possibility of its dissolution.

Mr. Helmuth said that the Committee might advise the Town on its next procurement of voting equipment or services, if Town Meeting appropriates funds for that.

MOTION:
Next Meeting

Mr. Auster moved that the Committee's next regular meeting be changed to Tuesday, June 3 at 7:30 pm at a place to be determined by the Committee Chair.

The motion passed.

MOTION:
Adjournment

Mr. Auster moved that the meeting adjourn.

The motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

Corrections

The words “the unmodified original copy” replaces “original” in the sentence that begins “Mr. Storch said that there should be clear procedures” under the “Voting Data” discussion reported on page 2.

APPROVED

as corrected
June 3, 2014

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

Eric Helmuth, *Chair*